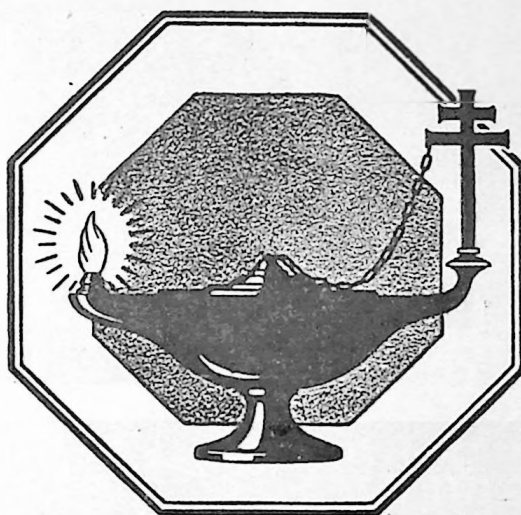


# TOC H JOURNAL



NOVEMBER—MCMXLIV

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THREEPENCE



# TOC H JOURNAL

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No. II

## A BIGGER AND BETTER TOC H

*Among the speakers at a Toc H District Rally at Diepkloof, near Johannesburg, on April 16 last, was ALAN PATON. He joined the movement seventeen years ago in Pietermaritzburg and for several years was a member of Ixopo Branch. In 1939, at the time when the Rt. Hon. Jan Hofmeyr succeeded Sir Herbert Stanley as Chairman of Toc H Southern Africa, Alan Paton was appointed Vice-Chairman. In 1934 he had been transferred from the Department of Justice to the Department of Education and came to Johannesburg to take over the Diepkloof Native Reformatory. There he has done a magnificent job and has provided one of the most outstanding examples of a man taking the spirit of Toc H into his everyday work. He has transformed the Reformatory from a prison into what it now is—in effect a model village. The lads, whose ages vary from 11 to 20, are given increasing freedom during their stay in the Reformatory and are taught to use this freedom properly. Last year 180 boys were sent home on leave; only two failed to return.*

*Apart from being an authority on the non-European problem, Alan has, we are told, a closer understanding than anyone else in Toc H Southern Africa of the English-Afrikaans question. Readers who do not know South Africa can scarcely appreciate the continual difficulties and dangers of the cleavage between English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. Toc H has done a little here and there to help bridge the gap between them, but it still offers a job of the very first importance to be tackled. Alan Paton made reference to it in his talk at the Diepkloof Rally, parts of which now follow.*

IT is highly improbable that a new and different Toc H will be built by the leaders you have raised up. But I repeat that there is one factor which might operate, but which is beyond our power to make operate and which must be left out of our plans—the possibility that men may appear with new vision and tongues of fire. But this, which comes only from God, we can't reckon upon; all we can do is to pray for it.

What is Toc H? It is an association of men and women, drawn together in friendship by common ideals of fellowship and service; in service building their fellowship; in fellowship learning the need of, and becoming fitted for, fresh service; in humility calling themselves sons and daughters of God, and striving, in one of the most natural and one of the least sanctimonious ways in the world, to know His will for them, their family and the world.

Each man stands in a dual relationship to Toc H. Firstly, Toc H is his instrument, and he sharpens it, cares for it, polishes it, that *he may use it* to serve the world. Secondly, Toc H is his mentor, his teacher, and he submits himself to it, learns from it, derives sustenance from it, so that *it may use him* to serve the world.

Therefore, if any man withdraws from Toc H, sneers at it, despises it because it is not bigger and better, or threatens to withdraw from it or despise it unless it becomes bigger and better, he is either a great man or a great fool. He is thinking only of using Toc H and not of being used by it. It was a poor and feeble church that men served in the darkness of the catacombs, but they were eaten by lions rather than deny it. It is true that many must have withdrawn from it and many must have said in excusing themselves: "this is a poor show that does nothing and

gets nowhere; and I tender my resignation." But their resignation cannot be compared with the resignation of those who gave themselves to tortures and lions and pitiless men. Do not imagine for a moment that I am praising poor and feeble movements; I am only praising poor and feeble men, whose poverty and feebleness we remember with admiration and reverence, calling those who possessed such virtues our Elder Brethren. Do not imagine I am pleading for a poor and feeble Toc H; I am only pleading with poor and feeble men, that they pause, not once or twice but many times, before they despise Toc H. I know of men who have left Toc H because it was not bigger or better and who have (and may God pardon me if I do not see the truth) built nothing bigger or better for themselves. Let us throw hurtful criticism down the drain and meaningless criticism too; Toc H is ourselves, and has no spirit but what we put into it. These critics are like a thousand men who bring their one-gallon tin of petrol to a bonfire; and because the bonfire is not bigger and better and because its flames do not reach to the very gates of Heaven, and because it is not a thousand-gallon conflagration already, they go away with their tins. What is the spirit of Toc H? It is our spirit. Its strength is our strength, its ideals are our ideals, its vision is our vision. And when men despise it, they despise themselves.

Why do we want Toc H to be bigger and better? If it is because we are embarrassed or are hurt when men ask: "What is Toc H?", then we are fools. The early apostles, when men asked "Who is this Christ?", were not ashamed, but overjoyed at the opportunity thus placed in their hands. There is only one good reason for wanting Toc H to be bigger and better and that is because there are great tasks crying out to be done, and only a bigger and better Toc H can do them. And surely we have learnt in this war that the best way is to start doing them.

#### All Men are Brothers

I would be failing in my task to-day if I were to give the impression that the best

defence of Toc H is to attack its critics. Yet nevertheless, before I make a more positive contribution, I have some more negative things to say. Dudley Meredith mentioned in the talk that led to this one, two great tasks of the kind that Toc H should attempt. One was to fight the evil thing called anti-semitism, and one was to fight the evil thing called anti-Afrikanerism.

Now some time ago I attended a meeting of the Toc H Lunch Club in Johannesburg, and during the lunch I was amazed to have passed to me, by a fellow-member, one of the most witty and cruel verses about the Jews that I had ever seen. These verses went the rounds, and I find it painful even now to recall their receipt to mind. It was a shock to me to find that this gathering, which could be made to weep tears about Afrikaners, and to feel very uncomfortable about natives, should swallow this venom with enjoyment. Rightly or wrongly, I said nothing, but I must say it to-day, if only to show you that it may be necessary to rebuild Toc H before we think of rebuilding South Africa.

In regard to the second point, you have heard too much from me already. But I note that the Officer-Administering-the-Government, speaking not long ago at Bloemfontein, said that the longer he lived, the more certain was he that the future of South Africa lay in the hands of bilingual men. Now you know that Toc H is almost entirely unilingual, and that my voice for the last ten years has been a voice in the desert. But if what His Excellency says is true, then again Toc H must humbly look to itself before it can proudly look anywhere else.

To harbour racial prejudice is not to know the spirit; the spirit is not to abstain from hating men, but to love men, to know that all men are brothers.

And here I cannot but tell you a story that some of you have heard before. Don Mackenzie brought it back from the North, and it is one of the most moving I have ever heard.

The South Africans were preparing for action, and the padre thought it his duty to say some farewell words. And so conscious



was he that some of these lads in front of him might tomorrow be no more, that he had only one message for them—God is your God, and man is your brother. God cares for all men, and may God forbid that any of you should go out tomorrow, perhaps to die, not caring about Him. For then you would have died never knowing the real purpose of human life.

One young South African, honest at least, stood up and said, "Padre, I've heard all this before and taken not much notice of it, and I don't see why I should start now."

He went out with half-a-dozen men the next day. Their objective was a German point, manned by about the same number of men. They were successful, and took it at the point of the bayonet, killing all their men. And they turned back for home.

But as our young lad turned, he heard a voice behind him. He went back and found the young German he had tried to kill, not yet dead, though dying. He wanted something, and thinking it was water, the young South African offered his bottle; but the German waved it away, and pointed to the pocket of his tunic. Our lad pulled out a letter and opened it out. The dying man pointed to the address, and in broken English told the other that he must write to his parents, and tell them how and when he had died, all the while clutching at the hands of his enemy, as though for the last human comfort, and then died.

The young South African, bowed down by a weight of intolerable grief, stumbled back to his lines. If this was human compassion, what could be the depths of the Divine Compassion? "Padre, I've heard all this before and taken not much notice of it, and I don't see why I should start now."

Well, he *had* started now. The world had changed overnight. And he made his way straight to the padre, to tell him what had happened to him. "Padre, you can have me now," he said.

That night, at a Toc H meeting just behind the lines, men stood to the light and, amongst the Elder Brethren, remembered the young German.

This is a great story, is it not? It brings me easily to my conclusion. The spirit of Toc H is to know that all men are our brothers, to have that knowledge fixed, rooted, confirmed, in the knowledge that God is our God.

It will be a fine thing to overhaul the organisation and machinery of Toc H; it will be a fine thing to make an inventory of its bones, to study its anatomy; but the first thing of all would be to take each Branch of the family, to breathe into it the spirit of brotherhood and brotherly love, so that men warmed to it and were warmed by it when they came into it. Such was Tubby's conception of Toc H, and there will never be another. Pour your one-gallon tin on to the fire, and the flames will rise a little higher; put your spirit into the bones and the bones will take flesh. If you think that can't be done, then know that nothing else *can* be done. If a car runs out of petrol you can't do more than one thing about it; you can paint it green or red or yellow with violet spots; you can rip out the upholstery and put in better; you can turn it into a charabanc and put in fifty more seats; but until you put juice into it, it's as dead as the Dodo. And until you put life into your Branch and your Group, you can forget your grand projects. For a live Branch in an Area is a light in the land, giving vision to the blind eyes and new strength to the weary.

### The Place of 'Brass-Hats'

There are some who will support me in this wholeheartedly. But they must beware. For some fall victim to a temptation to leave this really profitable and sensible line of discussion and to pursue it down a side-track that cannot lead anywhere, and to say "I quite agree with you; but this will never be done while so many of you fellows are busy on Area Executives and Control and Finance Committees, and are divorced from the life of the Branches and Groups." If you want Toc H to be bigger and better, you can't expect to keep all your men in Branches and Groups. Machinery must have king-pins that know nothing of the jolly life of the

spokes, and it must have ignition keys that know nothing of the ups and downs of the cylinders. Bishops can't enjoy parish life, and directors can't go hiking with the typists, and generals can't dine in the sergeants' mess. If your bishops begin to neglect the Church, directors the Company, generals the Army, then evil is the day. In that case get a new bishop, a new general. But don't expect the new bishop not to be a bishop, and the new general not to be a general. I repeat that the foundation of Toc H is its Branches and Groups; and it would be a foolish man who didn't know it. And it is there that new life flows into the body, and new blood into the veins, and new flesh covers the bones. But not there only. Let us not say stupid things about brass-hats; don't let us start being class-conscious in a family that is fighting class-consciousness.

#### Jimmie Brown's Contribution

You are Toc H; it is your strength, your vision, your loyalty, that makes Toc H. By all means let us combine in times of peace our jobs of national service; by all means let us strive to maintain the reputation and honour that these war years have brought us. But Toc H will never be stronger than you are. What is the greatest contribution that Jimmie Brown can make to Toc H? By all means let him dream big things for Toc H. But his greatest contribution will always be Jimmie Brown; his courage, his loyalty, his

tenacity, his devotion—he will never give more than that. Our greatest duty is to give ourselves. We stand in the dual relationship—to make Toc H our instrument, to sharpen it, polish it, care for it, that we may use it. To sharpen ourselves, to polish ourselves, to devote ourselves, that it may use us. All this in the hands of God. Tom Comber goes so far in his concluding article on the *House upon a Rock* as to say that ultimately the future of Toc H doesn't matter, if a man serves God. If he means that if a man serves God, he may let such things as Toc H go hang, not one of us will agree with him. But if he means that you shouldn't worry about Toc H and be anxious over it, and be sensitive about it, but serve it and God with all your might, then he is right. For the world belongs to God, and Toc H with it. Therefore let us serve Him, and let us serve the Elder Brother who taught us all that we know about service, and Toc H will prosper. Love one another, and all men shall know that you are His disciples. Think fairly, love widely, build bravely, witness humbly. Strive now and always to listen to His voice. Strive to learn God's will revealed in Christ. Practise thanksgiving. Leap with joy to any task for others. Neglect these things and not all your conferences, not all your committees, not all your plans, will avail you. Do all these things and Toc H will prosper. For our God has power beyond the dreams of men.

ALAN PATON.

## THE TOC H GIFT BOOK

Some time ago Hilda Hughes (Mrs. Devereux), conceived the idea of collecting and publishing a set of short stories by well-known authors and devoting the royalties on such a book to helping the Toc H War Services Fund. The result is *The Toc H Gift Book*, just published by Frederick Muller, Ltd., 8s. 6d.

The stories themselves are a generous gift from their many authors, the editing of them a labour of love by Hilda Hughes. Lady Tweedsmuir contributes a foreword, Tubby a message; and pictures of Talbot House,

Poperinghe, of Their Majesties the King and Queen as Patrons of Toc H and its Women's Section, and of Tubby (in the Old House) open the ball. What follows is admirable and varied entertainment. Among the authors of the twenty-two stories are 'household names' like Hugh Walpole, Lord Dunsany, Walter de la Mare, Clemence Dane, H. E. Bates, L. A. G. Strong and J. B. Priestley. Books are expensive and difficult to produce in wartime, but this is up to the best standard. So give your friends a treat and help the War Services of Toc H.

## TOC H CIRCLES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

*From time to time there has been news in these pages of the 'Toc H Circles' in the Middle East—they stretch from Persia to Tunisia and now into Italy. They are a remarkable spontaneous growth, containing a very small proportion in most cases—in some none at all—of actual Toc H members and varying greatly in their knowledge of Toc H principles and practice. Some would be recognised by any Area at home among its best units, others are little more than social gatherings, filling a useful temporary place in Service welfare, under the name of Toc H. What mark they will make on post-war Toc H it is too early to determine. DICK GROSE, after serving in the Army in North Africa, has until recently been working from Cairo as Circles Secretary. While on leave at home he wrote the following account of this work. He has since gone to Gibraltar in charge of Toc H.*

**T**OC H in the Middle East is a story of intense movement. Before the war two Branches (Jerusalem and Aden) and less than half a dozen Groups represented the strength of Toc H in the Area. Now all the main big towns have Talbot Houses and Clubs, controlled by our M.E. Commissioner, Gordon Turvey. My job as Circles Secretary was to do what I could to help them by visiting Circles and writing to them. Branches and Groups have not increased, but the 'Circles' have sprung up and grown beyond our highest expectation. To date approximately 250 Circles are known to have been founded, and their strength always increases.

The Houses and Clubs have done much to introduce thousands of men to Toc H, while the Circles have been the work of one or two men in a Service unit, pre-war members who feel that Toc H has a job to do among their fellows. The average strength of a Circle is about 25 to 30 men. It is unusual to have large crowds, but sometimes this happens where a Circle finds that its main job is to do something for the many who have to spend dreary hours in rough conditions. The Circles have brought a stimulus to our movement and have a great potential value for it in the home countries of the men who have thus rallied round newly-found leaders. To understand the spirit in the best Circles is to catch something of its contagion; it should be a valuable link between war-time and post-war Toc H.

### Some Samples

Imagine an Army hut at an R.A. base Depôt, a hut, originally an O.R's Mess, now

converted into a Reading and Writing Room or a Quiet Room; the time is 19.45. At one end a pianist is playing bright numbers, at the other 'char and wads' are being served by four or five newly-recruited Toc H help-mates. Chairs are arranged for a meeting. At 20.00 well over a hundred gunners, of all ranks, are persuaded by the Australian padre (he's the Chairman too) to sing old favourites for a quarter of an hour. Then Bert East, the Secretary, takes two minutes to give out three notices; the Jobby wants six men to clear up afterwards. The Padre presents three new Toc H Passholders, one of whom takes the Ceremony of Light. The speaker is introduced; questions and discussion are hard to stop. Short prayers at 22.00; then the valuable mix-up at the end. New friends made; more applicants for Passes; another pre-war member discovered. Somebody plays the piano; all the Toc H literature is taken. And so, reluctantly, they all drift away to their tents. That is typical of meetings at this Base Depôt for about eighteen months.

Or turn to the R.A.F. A large number of R.A.F. Maintenance Units have good Circles. In the smaller Units they are often the body responsible for welfare in the camp. Many an O.C. has learned the value of a Toc H Circle and given it practical support. In the larger and more organised M.U's it is a matter for co-operation, often with the Y.M.C.A., in helping to make life generally better for the men. The Circle in a M.U. near Benghazi has been a great help to the 'Desert Road House,' the splendid Toc H Club run by Dudley Greenacre. In an M.U. between Alexandria and Cairo the Circle has



Members of Heliopolis Circle, with Tubby.

been given by the O.C. a large tent which they run as a 'Quiet Room.' They arrange a Quiz, whist drives, musical evenings and so on, and a Sunday evening service, although they have no padre. This is a typical example of many.

Not all Circles are organised for anything in particular. Some are just a few men who meet regularly to improve their knowledge of Toc H and spread its influence in the work they do. I am reminded of the Casualty Clearing Station at Tobruk where men stayed far too long to be pleasant and did one of the grand jobs of the war. They had little time for meetings but infused the spirit of Toc H into their work of dealing with casualties, often under fire and always in very difficult conditions. These men are now in Scotland, enjoying a well-earned rest, and their Circle still lives.

In his article *Through the Canal* in the June JOURNAL Tubby mentions the 'Roundabout' Circle. The name arose because the Toc H Room, at one end of a large N.A.A.F.I., is situated at a cross-road which serves several units round about. More than once in the last twelve months the membership of the Circle dropped to two men, but they have run a very much used Quiet Room and Toc H Room throughout. They hit on the happy idea of combing the area for Rover Scouts. A Rover Crew was soon formed

which backed Toc H in a magnificent job. Now they are strong and have organised a District Team for the half dozen Circles nearest to them. They send out a monthly *Roundabout News Letter* to a large number of men who have become Passholders through the Circle—an excellent scheme which is in operation in many Circles.

In Italy a Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery has two Circles, one in each Troop, which have achieved a great deal. There is not one initiated member among them, but they now have about sixty Passholders and have consumed an enormous quantity of Toc H literature. 'Sago' (Capt. Eric Saywell, of Leicester Branch, whose work with a temporary unit on board a troopship was related in the JOURNAL of June, 1942) met them at a base in Egypt and at Talbot House, Cairo, where they became well-known guests on two or three short leaves before going to Sicily.

There are also special jobs for Circles. The 41st General Hospital, which is entirely devoted to cases of mental disorder, has proved that the ideals and principles of Toc H can help to balance a man's mind. Large numbers of patients, fifty to a hundred, attend the Hospital Circle, a fact soon noticed by the O.C. and other Medical Officers. The doctors not only back the activities of the Circle but have regularly attended the meetings in force. This has given them an opportunity



of meeting their patients in a different atmosphere, apart from Service routine and discipline. A large number of patients have become Passholders and have looked out for Toc H when they returned to their units. I well remember one of the meetings of this Circle, with over a hundred present. The speaker was Lieut. Commander Arthur Faulkner, peace-time Pilot of Grange Park Branch. He spoke on his old job in Toc H—prison-visiting, and, as it was a very hot night, he took off his elegant white jacket and stood in vest and shorts. He was good to hear and the questions afterwards were excellent. The Chairman had a job to close down an hour after the proper time.

### Organisation and Propaganda

Initiative is the key to achievement, and many a Circle has an interesting story to tell. Sometimes a strong Executive takes charge, sometimes it is a 'one-man show.' The perpetual desire for more knowledge of Toc H has been impossible to satisfy. Literature has been very scarce, and often one or two members of a Circle have given weekly five-minute talks on some aspect of Toc H and held special meetings at odd times to study and discuss Toc H more closely. This has led to 'Family Nights,' Toc H 'Gen' Nights,' Probationers' classes and, in a few cases, well-planned Training Days.

Several Circles have appointed a 'Social Secretary,' whose job is to arrange some social activity each week. For instance, an R.A.F. Circle a few miles from Cairo has organised trips to the Pyramids by moonlight or on the Nile, has booked blocks of seats at the Opera House, and run a Toc H Dance at the Greek Club, or a Darts or Table Tennis match against another Circle. A Circle in the Desert cannot benefit much from such social organisation but many have found the idea useful in various ways.

Another post which is more common is that of 'Propaganda Minister' or 'Advertising Manager,' whose job is to make Toc H known. Every Circle, Group or Branch needs to advertise somehow, somewhere, or it is apt to stagnate. Port Said is an excellent

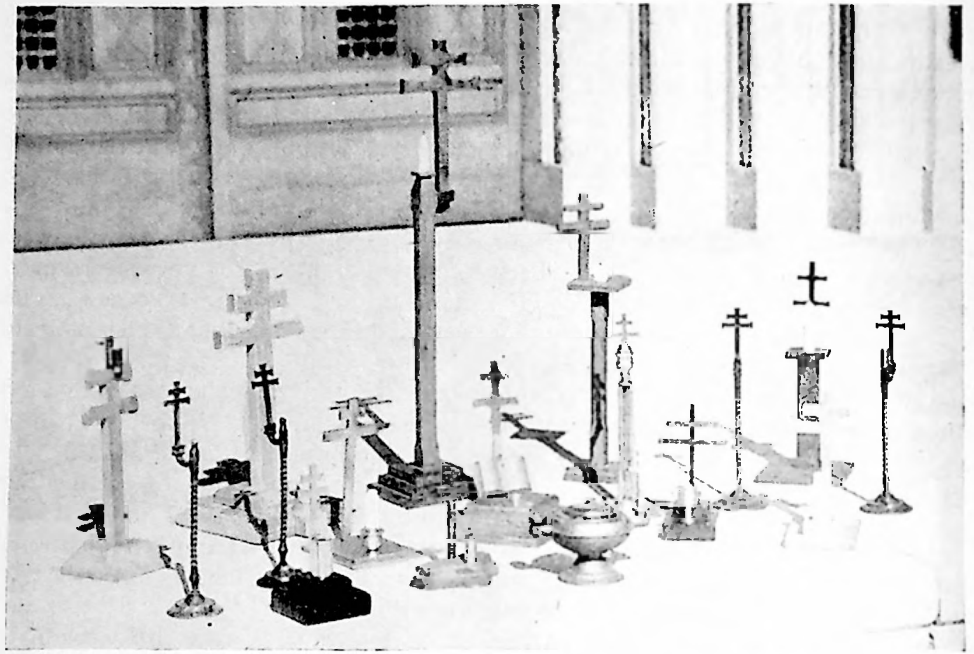
example of Toc H advertising. John Wilson-Neason, its 'Minister of Propaganda,' has studied the conditions and produced results. A card clearly giving the address, time and date of meetings, with the programme for four weeks, is put up in ships and Dock canteens, in all Services Clubs and Hostels. Thus every Thursday this Circle welcomes an interesting collection of visitors and maintains its own strength. Port Said has become a delightfully 'mixed bag,' including civilian, Navy, Army and R.A.F. personnel, with ranks well mixed. They also hold a monthly Ladies' Night and a Women's Section Circle has been started among the W.R.N.S. Their close co-operation with the Army Education Officer has now become a first-class job. The Army has taken a room for educational purposes and Toc H fellows man it every afternoon and evening.

Several other Circles are working closely with Army Education in their camp or area in organising debates, Brains Trusts and the like for large numbers. Toc H speakers have often been invited to go to lonely units to tell their story, and, indeed, some new Circles have been born in this way. This co-operation has helped some stagnating minds to think a bit harder. The favourite subject, of course, is 'The Post-war World.'

### Some Difficulties

Postings and general mobility are, of course, an ever-present difficulty and account for many Circle problems. Many examples could be given to tell how a remnant of men have worked 'till it really hurt' in order to maintain Circle life.

Owing to inexperience, lack of enough outside help and shortage of literature, an odd and unusual interpretation of Toc H by a Circle is sometimes inevitable. These aberrations, not useful to the movement, often arise out of well-known bogies—wrong leadership, misdirected enthusiasm, rank distinctions, laziness or extreme views in religion and politics. Circles have often needed help to overcome these disorders. There is an R.A.F. Circle in the Desert which struggled for twelve months against discord in the Exe-



*Rushlights of some of the Circles at the Cairo Rally on May 9.*

cutive, intolerant religious views and lack of support in jobs. This bad feeling was a headache to the Pilot. The solution came when the Circle acquired a new home, a room at the top of a good Services Club. They worked on the room, improved their meetings and advertised their presence. New blood was soon infused and they are now flourishing.

#### The Use of 'Light'

The Ceremony of Light in a tent on the desert, especially in times when the battlefield was not far distant, is deeply impressive. Many men have found Toc H through that experience. The importance of the Ceremony has thus been stressed, not by words, but in minds and lives. Usually some practical fellow in the Circle is entrusted with the making of a Light symbol, and there are some very fine examples. Some of the designs are elegant or elaborate, in metal; others are a crude Double Cross in wood, with a base to take a candle; shell-cases, in different forms and sizes, have often been used. The 1st Army Tank Brigade, under the guidance of Padre Harry Johns (known

to all as 'Bish'), have a 2-inch shell-case with a Double Cross cut in the side; a candle fits into the base inside and a cap covers the top, so that the light is seen shining out through the Cross. A Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery in Italy has a handsome olive-wood symbol made for them by the Italian farmer in whose barn the Circle meets. These examples could be multiplied many times.

#### Many Nations

Not only Britishers have met Toc H for the first time in the Middle East. South Africans, Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, Americans and men from many other lands have shown their practical interest in our movement.

The Union Defence Force Institutes, staffed by Y.M.C.A. and Toc H personnel, have done much to foster interest in Toc H among South African troops. The Springboks have several Circles of their own, and some very valuable meetings are held at Smuts' House, Cairo, and Springbok House, Alexandria. At the South African base in Egypt they have developed the practice of making every meeting a mixed affair with

the ladies. Some months ago I attended the Birthday party of the 'Zonderwater' Circle, which somehow caught the real spirit of the Toc H Guest Nights we used to know. The Australians and New Zealanders have some Circles of their own, but mostly they tend to mix with British units—a good thing.

Toc H Circles are doing their bit to cement Anglo-American relations. At a large R.A.F. Training Centre the strong Circle has an American Chairman of the Executive, 'Hank' Gibson, a 'grand scout' from Pittsburgh whose influence is having definite results in efficient organisation. Some of his American friends have become regular visitors and several are now Passholders. The spirit between the two elements is 'tops.'

There is an Anglo-Egyptian Circle in Cairo, which has had fluctuating fortunes. A team of Toc H men from Heliopolis are doing all they can to satisfy the keenness shown by a band of Egyptian Christians under the leadership of Hanna Famwe Effendi, Secretary of the Egyptian Y.M.C.A.

### Circles and the Future

Every Circle has a story, often fascinating, of its own, and in the Cairo office there is a file for each one, full of letters and monthly reports, pamphlets and news sheets issued by the Circle. Here is material indeed, enough for a book!

Already men are returning home from the Middle East, and their return will continue over a long period, possibly for several years to come. Already they are beginning to look up Toc H at home, of which they have heard and expect so much. As the stream of returning men swells to thousands many will be looking for their local Toc H in every town, village, District and Area in Great Britain and throughout the Empire. They have found it a joy to meet overseas; now they will want the added blessing of home conditions.

The spirit of Christian adventure has been the inspiration of many a Circle, as it must be of our own units. They are looking to us at home. Are we prepared for the responsibility?

DICK GROSE.

## THE ELDER BRETHREN

BARBER.—On September 23, ALWYN CROSBY ('Taffy') BARBER, aged 46, Jobmaster of Stirling Branch. Elected 17.12.'34.

CAIRNS.—Reported missing on February 16, now presumed killed, ARTHUR CAIRNS, a member of Walton and Dogsthorpe Group. Elected 12.3.'42.

CHAPMAN.—Killed in action on July 28, ERIC DALE CHAPMAN, L/Cpl., R.C.S., a Passholder.

CHRISTIENSEN.—On August 15, at Loughborough, W. A. CHRISTIENSEN. Elected in Paris, 26.4.'40.

COLLETT.—Killed in action on June 29, J. S. J. (Jack) COLLETT, a member of Wells Group. Elected 17.12.'37.

FORD.—On July 5, the Rev. F. S. FORD, Padre of Teignmouth Branch. Elected 20.10.'39.

GLEESON.—On September 19, under an operation, KENNETH PERCIVAL GLEESON, one-time Secretary of Crouch End Branch. Elected 30.5.'34.

JENNER.—In a road accident on September 7, JOHN JENNER, aged 70, a member of Mitcham Branch. Elected 11.11.'41.

JOHNSON.—On active service on August 28, RONALD STUART JOHNSON, 2nd Lieut., a member of Southampton Branch. Elected 10.3.'43.

RICHARDSON.—Killed in action in September, FRANK H. RICHARDSON, Lieut., Lincolnshire Regt., a member of Boston (Lincs.) Branch. Elected May, '36.

ROTHWELL.—By enemy action on August 22, PETER THOMAS ROTHWELL, Petty Officer, R.N., a member of the Services Branch. Elected 2.9.'41.

SYMONDS.—Reported missing in June, now presumed killed, ARTHUR SYMONDS, R.A.F., a member of New Mills Branch.

SMITH.—Reported missing, now killed in action, HAROLD SMITH, Sergt., a member of Tunstall Group. Elected 3.4.'35.

WHITLEY.—Died of wounds on August 29, EDWARD NEIL WHITLEY, Capt., R.A.M.C. Elected 18.1.'39.

## A BROADCAST APPEAL

*On the evening of Sunday, October 1, LORD CLARENDON, Chairman of our Central Revenue Committee, broadcast the following appeal in the B.B.C. 'Week's Good Cause.'*

WE of Toc H had hoped that Frank Gillard, B.B.C. War Correspondent and a leader of Toc H for many years, would be speaking to you tonight, but unfortunately his war duties have prevented him. He would, I know, have liked to be here to talk to you about this great work in which he is so interested. Many of you must have heard his recent broadcast of how he visited the original Talbot House, the birthplace of Toc H in Poperinghe, Belgium, when it was liberated last month. The House was intact though with broken windows. The Germans had been in occupation and had left so hurriedly that a meal was still on the table.

Twenty-nine years ago, in 1915, in that house in Belgium, Toc H was born and the first Services Club for all ranks was opened. Since that day Toc H has never ceased to grow. It became a vast peacetime organisation, carrying on the spirit of comradeship which had its roots in that first Club.

When this present war broke out the need again arose for Services Clubs for the men and women who have left their homes to fight and work for all they hold dear, and to free the world from oppression and tyranny. Since 1939 over four hundred Toc H Services Clubs have been established and maintained here at home, in all parts of the United Kingdom and on every fighting front. Service men and women, the women of the Land Army and munition workers have all found comfort in the homelike atmosphere of these Clubs.

In the Middle East and in Palestine the Clubs have given hospitality to thousands. Toc H has followed the fortunes of the Eighth Army across the Western Desert and

into Italy. Mobile Camp Clubs have kept up with the men fighting their hard way forward. In Gibraltar and Malta and among sailors of the Royal and Merchant Navies Toc H is a familiar friend.

Men in the uniform of Toc H are on French soil again; others, both men and women, await the order to go and Toc H will play its part in enemy country when the time comes.

In Burma the Rest Camp at Arakan, set up within sound of the guns, is one of the Clubs of which Toc H is proudest. Imagine the amazed gratitude of 150 officers and men coming down from weary weeks of jungle fighting for a forty-eight hour break, to find hot baths, beds with clean sheets, spotless tables and, greatest luxury of all, tea in bed in the morning! The visitors' book tells its own story; men inscribe their names and home addresses to the last little detail, reminded of home by the comforts provided by Toc H.

At Imphal a very large Club has been opened after being postponed by the siege of that place and the monsoon.

We have been sending picked personnel to India for the last eighteen months and running Clubs there for British and for Indian troops.

Great new claims will be made upon Toc H in the very near future, and to carry on this work Toc H needs money. Our scope is only limited by the amount we have at our disposal. I ask you tonight for generous support to help Toc H to carry out all the work it is so eager and ready to do.

Will you please give us any sum, however large, however small. Send it to me, Lord Clarendon, Toc H, 47, Francis Street, S.W.1.

### Congratulations

TO COLIN JOHN WILNOT LEE, F/Sgt., R.A.F.V.R., No. 99 Squadron, "a consistently good and reliable pilot," on the award of the D.F.M. for "courage and determination" in operations in Burma.

TO CHARLES WINCHESTER (Pilot of Carshalton Branch), Sergt. Bombing Instructor, "D" Coy., 55 Surrey Bn., Home Guard, on a Mention for "Bravery" in the *London Gazette*.



## MORE NEWS OF THE OLD HOUSE

SINCE the joyful news of the liberation of Talbot House, Poperinghe, which we were able to give last month in letters from Frank Gillard and Padre Royle of Toc H Canada, its first British visitors, we have five communications which carry the story farther. The Old House has now not only been visited but used by our own men of the British Liberation Army.

### The R.A.F. take over

The first news of this came in a letter from Flying Officer Sydney Hills, of 609 Squadron, R.A.F., late Secretary of the Toc H Group in the R.A.F. at Filey. Writing on September 20, he says:

"I write to tell you that the other day I visited the Old House. It seems that the Germans took over the House but not before the Townspeople had hidden the treasures—the Lamp, Notice Board, etc., and at present they are hidden about the town waiting for a Warden or someone in authority to claim them and open up the House again.

A few days ago some R.A.F. Regt. fellows had to be billeted and the Officer in charge approached the Bourgmestre who suggested Talbot House. On entering the place, only four days after Jerry had departed, he found the place filthy and stinking but undamaged. He set his men to work, and when I saw it, it was clean and homely. Jerry had installed a large cooking stove in the kitchen.

This Officer knew nothing about Toc H but soon learnt of its historic foundations and set to work to find out all he could about the place and to protect Toc H interests. He has restored the Upper Room and has held services there. He has upheld Tubby's 'Abandon rank all ye that enter here,' and has entertained anybody desiring to visit the House. He has done a very good 'show' and is only so sorry that he could not restore the garden to its former beauty. Unfortunately he has now had to move on and the key is once more in the care of the Bourgmestre.

As a little appreciation of his work I enclose a cheque for £5 0s. 0d. to be applied in the restoration of Talbot House . . ."

This was followed a few days later by a letter from Flying Officer James Huggins himself, of 2757 Squadron, R.A.F., one of the officers concerned:

"On the 13th September, I, in company with a flight of armoured fighting vehicles of the Royal Air Force Regiment, entered Poperinghe for purposes military. Requiring accommodation for both men and vehicles, we visited the Burgo-master. He suggested we occupy Talbot House, as it was most suited to our needs.



*The party at the back of the Old House.*

On entering Talbot House, we found that the Germans had committed a crime equal to sacrilege; the interior was in a disgusting condition and the whole place so altered as to pass recognition. There were a few occupants, Belgian Patriots, members of an organisation similar to our fire-watchers, but these people had only been in occupation for a few days. However, with the little time at our disposal we endeavoured to restore where possible, and, with the help of a Canadian Chaplain, the Chapel took on the semblance of sanctity. The Chaplain brought a few vestments, Toc H literature, a few photographs of Talbot House as it should be and, of course, Bible and Prayer Books. Unfortunately I am unable to supply the Chaplain's name. Our men used the Chapel for private prayer, but I regret that I could not make it possible to open Talbot House in the true traditions of Toc H, due, of course, to the nature of our work and the short duration of our stay.

In conclusion, I wish to express the feeling of elation which was ours at being the first British Forces to occupy Talbot House. It was a great honour. We are the youngest of the British Regiments, but we now feel that we have become, like yourselves, 'Old Contemptibles.' . . .

It is now my hope that Talbot House shall return to its former glory and minister to the needs of all Forces. I trust in God that I shall see this wish granted."

He encloses a chit, on the municipal notepaper of Poperinghe, with the familiar coat-of-arms in the corner, addressed "to the British Officers, Talbot House" by the Burgo-master, requesting them to allow the College of Poperinghe to remove certain articles of furniture, its property, which, as F/O. Huggins says, had been "nefariously confiscated by the Germans."

F/O. James Huggins comes from Bingley, Yorks., and his fellow officer. F/O. Scho-

field, from Delph, near Oldham, Lancs. A warm letter of thanks on behalf of us all has gone to both officers, together with inscribed copies of *Tales of Talbot House*, and *Over There* (the little Pilgrim's Guide to the House).

### Three other Visitors

The Canadian Chaplain, whose name F/O. Huggins did not know, turns out to be Padre E. C. Royle, our member from Sherbrooke and Montreal Branch, who visited the Old House a second time. On September 15 he wrote to us again :

" I have been down to Pop. again. I arranged a table and a few chairs, with cross and candlesticks on the table, as an effort to re-capture the atmosphere of the Upper Room. This will do as a temporary measure until the carefully hidden furnishings can be brought out and restored to their rightful place. There is a small but steady stream of pilgrims to the House, and they all climb to the Upper Room; I felt the cross, etc., would give them the invitation to kneel and pray. I also left a few booklets on Toc H there, which were given me by the good people next door, so a new generation can learn something of Toc H too."

He encloses money orders and adds :

" Most of this money was found in abandoned German equipment, and I can see no more fitting use for it than to help make up for some of the damage the Germans did to the Old House."

The fourth communication is an unsigned account from someone serving with the Tactical Air Force, forwarded by a member at Swindon. He speaks of the visit of Huggins and Schofield, and quotes the former as saying :

" I soon realised that this was no ordinary house and I made enquiries. I am not a member of Toc H, but when the Burgomaster told me that we had taken over the place where Tubby Clayton founded his soldiers' club in 1915, I realised that we owed it to a great movement to care for the

place, at least until the Toc H authorities can take over."

Our correspondent adds :

" They found that the Burgomaster and many other influential local people had cared for the historic fittings. The Lamp, whose light was to burn always, was buried for safety somewhere outside the town. The furnishings of the famous Upper Room where, for a quarter of a century, soldiers and their sons worshipped, were taken away before the Germans arrived and dispersed over the town in the keeping of people who knew and revered the Founder Padre . . . The Upper Room has been turned into a Chapel again . . . A table, lit by two ordinary candles, with a couple of vases of garden flowers, serves as an altar. The garden, once one of the joys of Talbot House, is undamaged but sadly overgrown. Still visible is a tablet recording ' Here was the entrance to cellars used as a refuge during bombing raids in the Great War.' "

The latest letter comes from Arthur Denyer, whose article, *Last Hours in the Old House*, in the June JOURNAL this year, described the scene in Poperinghe when, as the last of the series of voluntary summer Wardens, he received the telegram recalling him to his regiment in August, 1939. Exactly five years and one month later—on September 26 last—he was in Poperinghe again—with what feelings can be imagined. He did not actually enter the Old House, as the key at the moment had gone astray, but he saw Alida and heard from her that she had the Lamp in her possession. He adds :

" René died on February 28 " (*that is earlier than we suspected*)—" Olida says due to an illness brought on by the war. He died convinced that the English would return, and every day right up to the end looked towards the channel, waiting."

Denyer is likely to be stationed in Brussels for some time as an Army Education Officer, and we have put him in touch with our Services Club there.

### How our Belgian friends helped

*The following is a translation from the French of a most interesting report on the Old House during the German occupation, made by the Poperinghe lawyer, ARTHUR LAHAYE, as Secretary of the Association de Talbot House to its President, Paul Slessor. By Belgian law no foreigner may own house property in Belgium, and, as many readers realise, Talbot House is legally a Belgian possession, leased by a properly registered ' Association sans but lucratif ' (a company without profit) to Toc H as tenants. The committee of the Association consists of a majority of Belgians, our friends in Poperinghe and Ypres, but Padre Owen Watkins and Barkis are members and Paul Slessor is Chairman.*

*The report has been forwarded to us by Capt. J. H. Summerfield, R.A.S.C., who visited the House, in company with his Brigade Chaplain, Padre Lampe (Okehampton Branch), and saw Arthur Lahaye on September 27.*

THE arrival of the enemy in May, 1940, in the town brought about the immediate occupation of our House by the German forces.

Its occupation was at first partial and the soldiers, of whom the majority were Austrians, behaved fairly well. They let our precious souvenirs alone but unfortunately took away, when they left, all the bedding. The caretakers (René and Alida Bérat) had not left their posts and looked after the things jealously. The House itself had hardly suffered at all from bombing, and at our orders the necessary repairs were quickly done. It was as a matter of fact at this moment that the undersigned secretary returned from captivity, towards the middle of June, 1940.

As soon as possible an Extra Ordinary General Meeting was convened for the 30th July, 1940, in order to take all provisional and protective measures.

But the attitude of the enemy, at first indifferent towards Toc H, changed quickly and became menacing and arrogant.

Through the intermediary of a pro-German Belgian civilian (actually now under lock and key), the senior Commandant of Ghent took up an oppressive attitude towards our Society under the pretext that it was an enemy society. We then tried to prolong things as far as possible and in all discussions maintained that Talbot House was a Belgian Society and that it was the sole proprietor not only of the House but also of all goods and chattels which were therein. We purposely omitted to say that Talbot House itself was let to Toc H of London, which was therefore the owner of the goods, chattels and souvenirs in the House. Our aim was above all to gain time by discussion and to make the most of the situation; we were waiting for the early arrival of our deliverers!

However, the situation developed and on the 17th July, 1941, the occupier became brutal. We were turned out of the House and our courageous and faithful caretakers had twenty-four hours to quit. The brave René Bérat could not get over this terrible blow (he died on February 28th).

During the twenty-four hours given to us

to abandon all which we so much treasured we were compelled to save as much as possible. By means of wheelbarrows, vehicles, etc., we transported in cases all the souvenirs, the enemy not having formally stipulated that the furniture must remain. The sacred Lamp was buried in the Secretary's garden and some of the precious books and albums were distributed in his library. All the contents of the chapel were put in care of a neighbour who accepted the risk of looking after them, the Secretary's house not being considered a good shelter against enemy action.

Before leaving Talbot House an inventory of all which could be taken away was made. But the enemy asked in return for a copy of the inventory which we had. We concluded that it was the enemy's intention to take back all that we had taken away. In face of the enemy's threat we had to give up the original copy which we had, but very hurriedly a copy of the inventory, signed by the German officer and the '*Feldpostnummer*,' was made and this copy was declared exact by the Burgomaster. This is in our possession.

We had hoped that the affair was now finished and that we should not be further troubled. It was no good however: the *Oberfeldcommandantur* (Higher Command) of Ghent returned to the charge, always through a Belgian agent, now in fact in prison as a traitor. We did our best, still trying to discuss the matter. We referred to the Belgian Law of the 27/6/21 in regard to Societies *sans but lucratif*: "Talbot House of Poperinghe" was a legal Belgian Society and the fact that members of English nationality formed part of the society did not take away from it being a legal Belgian institution. None of its members were in fact owners and the Society as a whole was the judicial entity.

Naturally we always passed over in silence the fact that Toc H of Poperinghe had leased the house to Toc H of London who ultimately were the owners of the furniture in the House. We took that risk and have never hesitated on that point.

Then came the arrest of the secretary of Toc H of Poperinghe for reasons unnecessary to mention in this document.

When in April, 1943, the traitorous Belgian agent, instructed by the *Oberfeldcommandantur*, summoned the secretary, now out of prison, to give back all property of Talbot House in his possession, he refused to do so; everything was done to safeguard our ultimate rights and to preserve as far as possible our souvenirs and possessions belonging to the Society.

1. The sacred Lamp remained buried and is now intact.

2. The souvenirs, furnishings and furniture in the chapel, the library books, etc., are in the hands of the secretary's neighbour. The enemy agent, thanks to our various and discreet doings by underground methods, has the keys of the storehouse where various objects had been placed. We await the arrival of our President before destroying the locks of this House; the traitor agent now under arrest is the only person who has the keys. We have a complete inventory of everything.

3. Various chattels and furniture without historical value are still in the custody of various people—among others, Madame Bérat. These things will come back to Talbot House as soon as the General Meeting under the presidency of Major Slessor has decided to reinstall our old 'Everyman's Club.' The secretary had always refused to give up the account books and the big dossier of Talbot House which alone was proof of the Society's rights, or the contents of the strong box at the bank—silver chalices, etc.

4. These things had to be given to the enemy agent, but we had taken the true inventory of everything before giving away the contents of the strong box. It would have been difficult and too dangerous to get these things away in view of the enemy's jealousy; he had so many means of checking our doings. We knew that the chalices and other things in the strong box at the bank would be taken by the enemy, but not to Ghent. Other means were taken to recover these souvenirs which probably had not been able to find their way to the Reich.

5. Bank Account: The balance of 11,752 francs on the orders of the enemy agent had to be transferred to the Kredit Bank agency in Poperinghe. According to recent information the director of this bank agency has blocked this sum so that all danger in regard to this has disappeared.

6. Investments, i.e., 60,000 francs Belgian Rentes: As far as possible we did not refer to this in our dealings with the enemy but finally the enemy insisted and the secretary replied that he was awaiting a new and written formal order

before giving away the certificates. Meanwhile, always hunted by the Gestapo, the secretary had to quit his domicile, and from the 18th January, 1944, until the 6th September, 1944, was not discovered by the enemy. The result is that the certificates are at the bank of Brussels at the present moment.

In conclusion: During the war the secretary has been in touch with the Swiss Consulate with a view to getting a sympathetic authority in favour of Talbot House of Poperinghe. But unfortunately the Swiss Consul did not think he could do more than inform his friends in England of the situation. He did not feel he was able to discuss this question with the enemy.

Inasmuch as for four years everything possible has been done to preserve these precious souvenirs it is to be hoped that the rehabilitation will come in all calm and security. A permanent warden should be given the duty of guarding these souvenirs once they are in their old home. It is therefore under these conditions that we await the President in order to take the necessary decisions.

Since the departure of the enemy and the liberation of our town by our valiant Allies the House has been visited by numerous officers and soldiers. Mr. Frank Gillard was one of the first to visit us. Although unfortunately the House is emptied of its ancient relics, the enemy have gone and the damage is insignificant.

The above is a brief and faithful report which the Secretary considers should be made to his esteemed friend, the President of Talbot House, in London.

The members of the Association of Talbot House, Poperinghe, long for the speedy arrival of their President and will not open the House before his visit, so long hoped for and expected.

A. LAHAYE,  
Secretary.

Poperinghe,  
September 25th, 1944.

#### The London Centre

The London Centre, 19, Dean's Yard, Westminster, is now open each evening from 6-10 p.m. (Saturdays and Sundays 2-10 p.m.) to all members and friends of Toc H and its Women's Section. On Saturday, November 11, at 3 p.m., Jimmy Yates and his lads will be 'At Home' to all friends of 'Blighy'; W. W. Llewellyn will speak.